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647 many countries are carried out by village or municipal authorities,
[364] are in Malta centrally administered from Valletta.

Gozo provides in some respects an exception to this picture. Though Gozo is administratively and economically dependent upon Malta, it has had for many years a certain measure of autonomy under a separate Commissioner. This appointment is dictated by the island's distance from Valletta in time and space. This isolation has not surprisingly resulted in a widely held belief that the Maltese administration, in which, incidentally, a large number of Gozitans have always held important posts, has systematically
● [653] neglected Gozo. That there is a certain justification for this belief can be seen by anyone who compares the condition of the roads and the extension of street lighting, water and drainage in the two islands.

623 Partly to still for ever complaints about neglect, and partly as
653 an experiment with a concept of local government new to Malta, the Gozo Civic Council was established in the summer of 1961. Each village in Gozo now has an elected committee of six councillors, one of whom represents the village on the Civic Council. The Council has the responsibility for the maintenance of roads, government buildings, cemeteries and public gardens, village dispensaries and the museum and public library. It can also construct new roads and extend drainage, water and street lighting. To
[651] finance its work the Council receives the revenue from local taxes and from certain government property in Gozo. It also has the power to levy rates, but as all councillors made solemn promises to their constituents that they would not do so, this additional source of revenue must be discounted for the time being.

II

793 The Maltese Islands form a single province of the Catholic
795 Church. This province is divided into the Archdiocese of Malta and the Diocese of Gozo, which includes the small island of Comino. The Bishop of Gozo is suffragan to the Archbishop of Malta. As the senior or Metropolitan Bishop, the Archbishop has
[293] certain privileges and rights over his suffragan. These include the right to visit his suffragan's diocese (with Papal authority), should the latter neglect to do so; the right to appoint a temporary vicar on the decease of the Bishop of Gozo, if the Cathedral Chapter of

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definition of the dogma of her immaculate conception four years earlier, and to St. Joseph, who was declared patron of the Catholic Church in 1870. Virtually all the secondary partiti are dedicated to one of these two.[1] At the same time, there was a general elaboration of the celebrations connected with the cult of saints, including the Italian and Sicilian custom of having bands play during the festas.[2] These were but a part of the more general influx of Italian ideas and customs which accompanied the refugees from Italy of the Risorgimento, who streamed into Malta following 1850. The propaganda efforts of the pro-Italian politicians of the time assisted in the diffusion of these customs, especially in the urban areas.

During this period a conception of social organization new to Malta was also gaining currency, namely the idea of voluntary associations for laymen, and in particular, social clubs for 'gentlemen'. After the establishment in Valletta of the exclusive British Union Club in 1826 and the equally exclusive Casino Maltese in 1850, clubs of various kinds began to spring up in many villages. They multiplied so rapidly that a local chronicler wrote in 1890, 'Today you don't find a village without one or two, nor a city without three or five.'[3]

The latter half of the last century was a period of relative economic prosperity for Malta. This resulted from the increase in military and naval activity after the outbreak of the Crimean War; the sharp expansion in government spending on public works programmes from 1859 to 1865; and the renewed world demand for Maltese cotton as a result of the cotton shortage created by the American Civil War.[4] The economic boom increased the demand for unskilled labour from the villages. This, in turn, helped to disseminate urban-Italian cultural traits. It also provided a financial basis which permitted increased expenditure on festa decorations, fireworks, and above all, uniforms and instruments for the bands. Finally, this period saw the establishment of government schools in all the villages. City-born schoolmasters moved into rural

[1] See Appendix A.

[2] See, for example, Giuseppe Pitrè, *Feste Patronali in Sicilia*, vol. XXI of *Biblioteca delle Tradizioni Populari Siciliane* (Torino-Palermo, Carlo Clausen, 1900), *passim*. He also indicates that a number of Sicilian towns and villages are divided by rivalry between supporters of different saints. (pp. xlvii ff.)

[3] P. P. Castagna, *Lis-Storja Ta Malta* (3 vols.; Valletta, C. Busuttil, 1890), III, 128.

[4] Charles A. Price, *Malta and the Maltese: A Study in Nineteenth Century Migration* (Melbourne, Georgian House, 1954), pp. 105 ff.

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people to have the final say in the nation's vital means of production.'[1] These policies have a general appeal to labourers and are among the reasons for the party's popularity.

The Labour Party is closer to the worker than any of the other political parties. In this respect, its organization resembles that of the Church. As already noted, the MLP rests on its village and district organization. This has enabled the average worker to have a say of sorts, not only in his party's policy, but, when it was in power, also in the affairs of government. How he and his neighbours were able to manipulate the party structure to their advantage is a matter which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

During its period in office the Labour Party did much to improve conditions for the workers and the poor. This is another reason why many support it. It introduced many social benefits, including the extension of medical services, regular allotments of free food and social assistance allowances for the needy and aged. It also built many new schools, surfaced dusty roads and undertook other large public works projects which gave employment to many, besides benefiting the community. Moreover, the party did a great deal to improve agriculture by bringing in foreign experts who set up an advisory service and introduced new crops and techniques of cultivation. All these and the general atmosphere of activity which permeated the Labour Government, gained great popularity for the party and its leader.

There is yet another important way in which the MLP attracts many: it has attacked the established authority of Britain, the Church, the local captains of industry and the prosperous members of society. This outlook appeals not only to many poor and underprivileged persons, but also to the young and the uninfluential who are seeking to establish their personal independence and to make their mark on society. This opposition to authority and vested interests holds an attraction for many social 'misfits', such as the young 'Teddy Boy' element, the eccentrics and free thinkers. These find in the MLP a haven for their nonconformity to the social and moral teaching of the Church. Though social and religious stigma still attaches to them, many find it easier to bear in the company of others who have similar beliefs and problems. The Labour Party has thus provided social outcasts with a sense of

[1] MLP manifesto. See Appendix B.

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patrons; others have established fairly close contact with them through business relations.

The patronage of the parish priest has traditionally been important. Not only are all villagers his spiritual clients, but he is also a source of charity and assistance in many fields. He serves his parishioners individually in the capacity of legal adviser, character reference and often also as letter-writer and banker. He frequently argues their claims against the government. He also represents the interests of the community at large, and attempts, often successfully, to obtain improved public amenities such as new roads, street lighting and so on. At least, this is the role that he occupied until the introduction of representative government.

III

Influence through the networks of personal relations and patrons is the traditional method of handling contacts with authority. It still operates when representative government is in abeyance. But the advent of elected government introduced a new set of relations, and provided a new focus of power. Political parties and professional politicians provided new and surer channels of influence and sources of patronage, though they have not replaced the old ones. The villager now uses both old and new channels, separately or together.

The organization of all parties, at least before Mintoff reorganized the Labour Party, was rather simple. Party interests were represented in the villages by personal canvassers or party agents, as well as by the candidates themselves. The old Labour Party under Paul Boffa had a number of village party committees. When the party was returned to power, patronage and influence flowed abundantly, and brought the whole structure into vigorous life. The canvassers became important people who could pass along requests and schedule appointments with the local MLA's and even the Ministers. They also helped the local MLA's prepare the lists of people who were to be given jobs, for until 1955 most of the lower-grade industrial labourers with the Public Works Department were employed upon the recommendation of the local MLA's. Politicians who held office before 1955 often told me that making out the employment rosters and dealing with the daily queue of job-seekers were among their most difficult and

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time-consuming tasks. To help as many as possible, they often made up new job rosters every few months.

Canvassers would often expect presents for their work as intermediaries and for the favours they promised or secured. By and large, the party agents or canvassers were not popular figures, at least in retrospect. I came across many accounts of how they had exploited their positions to enrich themselves. The usual story was that they had accepted gifts – a rabbit, some chickens, a bottle of whisky or even cash – but had not assisted as they had promised. These tales may or may not be true; I had no way of checking. It is significant, however, that persons of all political colours, including former Ministers and MLA's, believe them to be true.

Mintoff's government did much to change the course of the stream of political patronage. To begin with, shortly after it came into office in 1955, the MLP passed a law which made it compulsory for those seeking employment with the government as industrial labourers to register with the Department of Emigration, Labour and Social Welfare.[1] There they had to wait their turn. This took away from MLA's a considerable source of patronage. The MLP also established special sub-committees of the Labour Committees in each village to deal with the complaints and requests of the local inhabitants. A member of the sub-committee was generally available to the public for an hour or two every evening. All requests for assistance and complaints were discussed by the entire sub-committee, which would countersign the routine ones and send them along to the appropriate government department. More important matters were brought personally to the attention of the civil servant concerned by a member of the sub-committee. Complicated requests and serious complaints were forwarded to the District Committee, where they were discussed at the regular weekly meetings with the district MLA's, who might then take the matter up directly with the Minister. Civil servants, on the whole, handled complaints and requests for action from the Local Committees with much the same dispatch they would give a request from their Minister. Some Ministers even went so far as to instruct their Department Heads to ignore all complaints brought to them by private persons, especially parish priests. They were told only to act on those presented by the Local Committee.

[1] Act No. XIV, 1955: 'An Act to Make Provisions for the Establishment and Regulation of an Employment Service.'

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653 Another very important function the Local Committees performed during the period the MLP was in power was to obtain improvements for the village. Requests for drainage, new roads, street lighting and, above all, new schools, were submitted to the District Committees. There the proposals were screened and given priority ratings by the committee members and the district MLA's. When these projects were implemented, and a large number were, the Local Committees naturally received credit for them. This added to their claim to represent their villages, and strengthened the formal structure of the party.

647 This system of handling patronage and complaints gave the villager a direct contact with authority. It was a fairly simple procedure, and many considered it reasonably impartial, though of course it did help to be a member of the Labour Party in good standing. Moreover, the complainant, even though he might not succeed in his cause, had the satisfaction that it had received attention, and it did not cost him a nice fat rabbit. This does not mean that there was no abuse. Civil servants complained that they were often intimidated by zealous MLP members who threatened to report them to their Ministers if they did not comply as requested. This friction was particularly keen between the Local Committee members and the village police, street sweepers and teachers. One head teacher I knew was particularly bitter about his caretaker, who was a member of the village MLP committee. The caretaker would stroll into the head teacher's office if he disagreed with the disciplining of a child, for example, and threaten to report him to the Minister if he did not lighten the punishment.

But on the whole, the MLP made a concerted effort to take patronage out of the hands of canvassers and MLA's alike and channel it through the various committees of the party apparatus. This not only strengthened the party, it also won it considerable popularity. Moreover, it relieved MLA's and Ministers of a heavy administrative load; they were only called in on the more complicated matters. In short, the Local Committees came to function as branches of the government.

When the Labour Government resigned in 1958, the MLP clubs and committees lost the influence they had with government. They once more became merely propaganda and social centres. But the role they had played for three years in representing the interests of government at the village level and in

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accused of being anti-clerical and against the Church because they opposed the will of the parish priest.

Shortly after Mintoff took office, the Local Committee in Kortin made plans to open a new avenue into the village. The scheme, first projected by government planners over sixty years before, was designed to ease the flow of traffic through the village and provide a wide, tree-lined promenade leading to the main square in front of the church. Unfortunately, the project required the demolition of four buildings, two of which were small chapels used as warehouses for the festa decorations. Because of this Dun Bert, the parish priest, bitterly opposed the scheme, as had his predecessors. He claimed that most of the village supported him. The Labour Committee, on the other hand, felt that it had the backing of the village, and went ahead with the project. The road was finally opened, and it proved to be a great success. But the two small churches were destroyed, and the relations between the Labour group and the parish priest remained hostile. Six years later, Dun Bert and his supporters were still pointing to the avenue as positive proof that the Labour Party is fundamentally opposed to the Church.

IV

But if the political parties have modified the traditional system of patronage somewhat by providing a new channel of influence for the villager, the professional politician of today is by and large the same traditional patron. That is, the successful politicians are largely drawn from the professional classes; they are still the doctors, the lawyers, the architects and the chemists. Indeed, until recently the lists of candidates often read like directories of the professional classes. This situation prevailed until about the time of the Labour Party split in 1949, when virtually all the professional class Labour MLA's sided with Dr. Boffa and formed the Workers' Party, while most of the MLP Executive and the rank and file supported Mintoff. After this the Labour Party asked people from all classes to stand as candidates, and began to push up working-class leaders trained in union and club politics. But the politicians from the professional class still heavily outnumber their working-class colleagues, even in the Labour Party.

Table 8 below illustrates this. Of the fifty MLA's elected in the